DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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Second Infant Death from Whooping Cough In San Bernardino County

San Bernardino. An infant under two months of age has died from pertussis (whooping cough) in San Bernardino County. This is the County's second infant death from pertussis in 2010.

"This sad case reminds us that the best way to prevent pertussis is to get vaccinated," said Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare, San Bernardino County Health Officer. He emphasized that the adolescent-adult pertussis booster vaccine (Tdap), is recommended for the following individuals:

- Anyone 7 years and older who is not fully immunized, including those who are more than 64 years old,
- Women of childbearing age, before, during or immediately after pregnancy, and
- Other people who have close contact with pregnant women or infants.

"Immunity from pertussis vaccine or disease wears off, so most adults are susceptible to pertussis and should get immunized to protect themselves and their families," said Ohikhaure. Infants are especially vulnerable if they are not immunized or incompletely immunized. Infants under the age of 12 months have more serious illness from pertussis, and they are more likely to have complications and be hospitalized than persons in other age groups.

The pertussis vaccine is safe for children and adults. Infants can get the first pertussis vaccination at 2 months of age, but they aren't adequately protected until the series of three shots is complete at 6 months of age. It's preferable for pregnant women to be vaccinated after the first 12 weeks gestation.

Parents can also help protect very young infants by reducing contact with persons who have cold symptoms or cough illness. Pertussis is a bacterial illness spread through the air from person-to-person, through close contact with droplets released when someone

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Gregory C. Devereaux
County Administrative Officer

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coughs or sneezes. The illness starts with cold-like symptoms that get more severe after one-to-two weeks. Rapid coughing fits follow, that may have a whooping sound, lasting 6 to 10 weeks.

Adults are urged to contact their health care provider for information about the booster vaccine that is best for them, and to get immunized. Immunizations are a routine benefit covered by most health insurance plans.

Dr. Ohikhuare recommends that all health care providers continue heightened surveillance for pertussis and promptly treat symptoms of the disease.

The current epidemic levels of whooping cough in California are the highest reported in 52 years. To date, there have been **3,834** confirmed, probable and suspect cases of pertussis reported in 2010. This is a seven-fold increase from the number of reported cases during the same time period in 2009 when **530** cases were reported.

In San Bernardino County, **40** cases of pertussis have been confirmed to date. Last year at this time, there were **7** cases reported in the County.

San Bernardino County Department of Public Health provides pertussis vaccine in all its clinics. For clinic locations and schedules call 1 (800) 782-4264, or visit the website at www.sbcounty.gov/dph.

For more facts about pertussis and vaccine guidance, visit the California Department of Public Health website at http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx, or the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pertussis/default.htm.

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